

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Terror Management Theory and Politeness: The Effects of Mortality Salience on Preferences for Proper Linguistic Etiquette

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Terror management theorists propose that people experience death anxiety when reminded of their death and defend against it by engaging in symbolic psychological defenses through cultural identification. Language is an integral component of culture and the human experience. A study was conducted to examine the effects of mortality salience on people's evaluations of the cultural norm of linguistic politeness. It was hypothesized that participants who had their mortality made salient would downgrade impoliteness and show more favor toward politeness when evaluating requests and persons and rating their likelihood of compliance with the requests in comparison to control participants. The data did not support the hypotheses. Study limitations, theoretical considerations, and future avenues for research are discussed.